



Twenty years on

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LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Twenty years on

Research journals generally look forward, not back. But in this 20th anniversary issue of *Genes & Development*, a brief reflection is appropriate.

The expectations of the journal were boldly stated in the first issue. Publish molecular genetics research of the highest quality; referee fairly and quickly; publish rapidly; reproduce illustrations very clearly; and ensure everyone can afford a subscription.

So, 20 years on, how are we doing? Compare the papers in this issue and the first (the Table of Contents is reproduced on the gatefold cover). The scientific questions addressed and the techniques used are different, of course, and the scope is much broader but the original editorial vision—"coverage of all aspects of gene expression and regulation, including the elucidation of normal and abnormal development and differentiation"—remains remarkably applicable. As does our commitment to rapid and fair peer review, which, like democracy according to Churchill, may be the worst form of government, except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time. Knowledgeable referees have helped give *Genes & Development* an impact factor rated among the top four in cell biology, genetics, and developmental biology. The quality of the science in the journal is not in doubt.

Other goals have been profoundly influenced by the introduction of online publishing exactly 10 years ago. Electronic manuscript submission and review have helped speed up decision-making, and publishing online ahead of print means that papers can reach their audience within days of acceptance. The universally affordable subscription has become a reality through changes in business practice. Most scientists can reach current issues through an institutional subscription or license, and unrestricted access to back issues 6 months after publication has opened the journal to all readers worldwide. A complete electronic archive of the journal will become available later this year.

Genes & Development relies on several organizations and countless individuals. The journal was conceived in conversations between Steve Prentis, as he joined the staff of Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, and members of the Genetical Society of Great Britain. The journal was launched as a joint venture of the Society and the Laboratory. With the support of successive Society officers, and the Laboratory's leadership, the partnership survived the financially anxious early years and has continued to benefit the journal, particularly by sustaining a European editorial office. Throughout its life, the journal has been printed by The Sheridan Press of Hanover, PA, with expertise that is clear in every issue and a much valued willingness to meet our technological and scheduling needs. The journal is published electronically with the

HighWire Press of Stanford University, an association that has been vital in achieving the journal's current prominence.

Over the years, thousands of scientists have assisted the journal by reviewing papers, serving on the editorial board, and offering papers for highly competitive selection. Such community support is a significant element in the journal's continuing success. It also sustains the group of dedicated people who edit the journal, produce it, sell subscriptions and advertisements, and fulfill orders. Their efforts have been inspired by a distinguished succession of executive editors. Tragically, Steve Prentis did not live to see the launch of his creation. The Laboratory was fortunate to find successors from within its own scientific ranks—first Michael Mathews, and for the past 18 years, Terri Grodzicker. As European Editors, Graham Bulfield, Nicholas Hastie, Davor Solter, Rudi Grosschedl, and most recently, Winship Herr, have been essential to the enterprise.

More manuscripts than ever are being submitted to the journal, and the relentless tasks of responding to authors and managing a rigorous selection process are ably handled by editorial staff in Cold Spring Harbor, NY (Assistant Editor Laureen Connell and Heather Cosel-Pieper, Bibi Garite, and Roberta Salant), and in Lausanne, Switzerland (Laurence Flückiger and Muriel Delestre).

In Terri Grodzicker and Winship Herr, the journal is fortunate to have at its editorial helm wise and experienced scientists whose taste, judgment, desire for good advice, and willingness to make tough choices underpin the journal's first-class reputation.

The editorial in the first issue of *Genes & Development* remarked that the real value of a scientific journal can only be properly measured after it comes into existence. The measurement quickly became highly positive, and 20 years on remains so. We plan to make sure that continues.

John R. Inglis

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